was $19.55. In 1967, the 1966 crop sold for an average of $14.22, a decline of more than 27 percent. By mid-April 1968, the average price received for the 1967 crop was $14.82, and since that time the average has dropped, because the lower quality pelts are always the last ones sold.

These lower prices are the main reason for the decline in the number of mink producers still in operation. The $14.22 average price of 1967 is actually below the cost most producers encounter in raising the mink. Many producers have not quit, but have been forced to use up reserve funds or have delayed improvements to their facilities. Both measures are temporary and cannot be sustained over too long a period.

Foreign producers have lower production costs and have, therefore, increased their production at a faster rate than domestic producers. According to the U.S. Tariff Commission, the production of the four Scandinavian countries now exceeds that of the United States. The United States consumes 45 percent of the world crop while producing only 27 percent.

Imports account for more than 50 percent of the domestic consumption. The higher costs and lower prices facing the domestic producer give the advantage to the importer, and this means the imports will continue to increase unless some restrictions are placed on these imports.

H.R. 6694 seeks to control the importation of mink pelts while still sharing a substantial part of the market with our foreign friends. I think the bill is fair to the importers and is vitally necessary to protect the existence of the domestic mink producer. I urge its adoption.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Moss, for bringing to us your thoughts. Are there any questions?

Our colleague from Wisconsin, Mr. Kastenmeier, is our next witness.

We appreciate having you with us this morning, and you are recognized.

STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT W. KASTENMEIER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF WISCONSIN

Mr. KASTENMEIER. Mr. Chairman, this hearing on mink import controls legislation before the House Committee on Ways and Means is particularly welcome because it comes at a critical time in the life of the mink industry and it offers those most directly involved a chance to describe their situation and to suggest a course of action.

There can be no mistaking the fact that our domestic mink growers face a very serious challenge to their continued existence due to the oversupply of pelts on the U.S. mink market and the resulting decline in prices for the producers.

Until recent years imported pelts constituted a fairly stable proportion of the U.S. market. In the past 5 years, however, there has been an alarming increase of nearly 50 percent in foreign imports, and duty-free imports of these foreign pelts have surpassed the 5 million mark.

The Scandinavian countries are the main source of the increasing imports in recent years. The combined mink production of Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden now exceeds U.S. production. With